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ABSTRACT

This paper described the preliminary results from the first phase of an exploratory study that seeks to define and understand sense of community on high school campuses. Three teacher focus groups, one administrator focus group, and one student focus group were held, ranging in size from five to nine participants. Participants were diverse in ethnicity and social class, representing a total of 17 public and private high schools. Ethnographic observations at additional schools were added as the study progressed. To date, focus groups suggest that shared beliefs and interests, warm interpersonal relationships, democratic and participatory functional relationships, and the incorporation of diversity are critical dimensions of school community. Discussions with students and staff also indicate that nonteaching staff, such as custodians or security guards, may play significant roles in the school community. In general, public school staff felt relatively powerless to improve the campus environment, but students thought that much could be done to improve the level of community on campus. The difficulties brought about by the lack of community outside the school were noted by participants. (Contains 24 references.) (SLD)

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CARING IS NOT ENOUGH: ASSESSING COMMUNITY IN HIGH SCHOOLS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper describes preliminary results from the first phase of an exploratory study that seeks to define and understand sense of community on high school campuses. Three teacher focus groups, one administrator focus group, and one student focus group were held, ranging in size from five to nine participants. Participants were diverse in ethnicity and social class, representing a total of 17 public and private high schools. As the study proceeds, we will include additional schools in our group discussions and conduct ethnographic observations. Research findings will be used to develop tools to assess community and the resources necessary to maintain community on high school campuses.

To date, student and staff focus groups suggest that shared beliefs and interests, warm interpersonal relationships, democratic and participatory functional relationships (e.g., open communication, involvement in decision-making), and incorporation of diversity are critical dimensions of school-community. Discussions with students and staff also indicate that non-teaching staff such as security guards and counselors may play significant roles in the school-community. In general, public school staff felt relatively powerless to improve the campus environment and underscored the importance of resources for organizational reforms such as smaller class sizes. Students, on the other hand, felt that, even without outside help, there was much that could be done to improve the level of community on campus, and they emphasized the need for increased dialogue among students and staff.

Both students and staff indicated that a significant barrier to creating community in school is lack of community outside of school. Areas torn by racial, class, or "turf" divisions provide a weak foundation for building community among diverse groups in school. Also, differences in attributes, viewpoints, and interests may frustrate close relations on campus. Caring may not be enough to bridge these divisions: Students and staff may care about each other's well-being, yet lack a sense of community because of differences in interests or core beliefs. High school administrators noted that building a sense of community may be harder in public schools than in private schools. Public schools are expected to respect students' diverse values and lifestyles, while private schools may develop a sense of community around shared religious beliefs. Also, tenure policies may limit public school principals' ability to terminate staff who do not share in their schools' values and sense of purpose.

The applicability of these findings to younger students and other settings should be viewed with caution. For young children, caring relations may be very salient, while shared beliefs may be less important than they become in high school. Another limitation of the data is that all focus groups to date have been conducted in a liberal, culturally diverse metropolitan area. Rural areas, homogeneous schools, and more conservative settings may have different notions of school-community.

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Various high school reforms aim to build a sense of community on campus that promotes student and staff performance and well-being. Many of these reforms also seek to foster closer links between schools and the larger communities they serve. To understand and assess the influence of these reforms, we need to conceptualize "community" with empirical specificity. What are the defining elements of community in high school? What are the boundaries of school-community--for example, should we consider non-teaching staff such as custodians and security guards as part of the school-community?[1] What are the supports and barriers for building community on campus? What outcomes should a healthy school-community enhance?

This paper describes preliminary results from an exploratory study that addresses these questions. Building upon an historical and theoretical framework for examining school-communities, the study draws upon the voices of public and private high school administrators, teachers, and students to identify the elements, boundaries, and contextual influences of school-community. In addition to increasing knowledge about school-communities, these findings will be used to develop tools for assessing the level and context of community in high schools.

Historical and Theoretical Context

Our theoretical approach to the topic builds upon organizational and ecological perspectives on school-communities, as well as research on adolescents' psychosocial development. Drawing from Bronfenbrenner (1979) and others, we conceptualize school members' sense of community on campus as a function of social networks both within and outside the school. In other words, school members are most likely to feel attachment when they perceive that their relationships on and off campus (e.g., with peers, other school members, and family) are interdependent and mutually supportive. Research on the social organization of schools identifies shared values, caring, and collaboration as defining characteristics of healthy school-communities (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988; Smith & Scott, 1990; Solomon & Battistich, 1993). It is also likely that shared values, caring, and collaboration among schools and external social networks that school members participate in may influence the health of school-communities. Links between school-communities and school-members' communities of origin, and congruency between school and home cultures, may affect teacher collegiality and morale and children's academic and psychosocial development (Boykin, 1994; Gibbs & Huang, 1990; Louis, 1990; Metz, 1990; Valdivieso & Nicolau, 1994).

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[1] By "school-community," we mean the group identity and set of relations among school staff and students. We use the term "school-community" to distinguish community among school staff and students from workplace-community, neighborhood-community, ethnic-community, etc., which may also be evident on campus as sub-communities within the school-community.

For a number of reasons, fostering positive relations at school may become increasingly problematic at the middle and high school levels. As students move from neighborhood schools that are often relatively homogeneous in terms of students' social backgrounds to secondary schools that draw from several neighborhoods and thus are often more heterogeneous, the likelihood of contextual dissonance may increase (Bohrnstedt, 1993). Some young people may try to reduce their dissonance by avoiding inter-ethnic relationships and behavioral patterns associated with other ethnic groups on campus. However, in other cases, defiance against school staff may not simply be a reaction to the discomfort of dissonant surroundings. Instead, it may reflect adolescents' increasingly sophisticated critique of racial, gender, class, or other biases in the school environment and in society (Fine, 1987).

Regardless of young people's social backgrounds, building positive relations at the secondary school level may pose challenges. Very young children are, in a sense, "hard-wired" to be lovable and loving--their identification with and dependence on the adults in their lives attract care and concern. As young people enter adolescence, however, their cognitive and physical capacities increase, thus expanding their ability to form social identities and networks separate from adult authority. Peer pressures to engage in destructive behaviors may increase as children grow older, while the level of resistance to peer pressures may decline (Lewis & Lewis, 1984), depending upon the stresses and opportunities in young people's environment, and the values, interpretations, and coping mechanisms with which they respond to these conditions (Gibbs, Huang, et al., 1990; Ianni, 1989). Also, as young people's adult identities and valuations begin to take shape, the potential for conflicts among students and between students and staff over such controversial matters as personal, ethnic, and sexual expression may increase. Social differentiation by academic and career aspirations may also increase during adolescence, reflecting the schisms in adult society. Some researchers argue that the separate academic tracks and impersonal organizational structure of many secondary schools exacerbate divisions among students and staff (Bryk & Thum, 1989; Fine, 1994; Page, 1989).

In search of models for building positive relations in school, many people look back with fondness on the sense of community cultivated in the fabled one-room schoolhouse before the rise of the large, departmentalized modern high school. With little money and less regulation, the one-room schoolhouse often provided a climate of caring and responsibility deeply rooted in the values of the surrounding community. Along with churches, schools were often a center of community activity and affirmation. Parents expected schools to not only provide book-learning, but also to help young people develop into responsible members of their community. Why do schools today seem so much less successful at forging positive relations in school that enhance the well-being of students, staff, and the larger society? What can be done to improve the sense of community on high school campuses?

Comparing school climates today with those of the past may be unfair--over the years, student and school characteristics have changed. At the turn of the century, most young people dropped out before high school graduation (Hodgkinson, 1985), thus schools had less of a role in socializing young adults. Following in their parents' footsteps, young people sought jobs in agriculture, manual trades, or small, family-owned businesses, and their elders took on the responsibility of helping them mature into responsible community members. Young people who were troubled or trouble-makers became the responsibility of reformatories and law-enforcement--teachers were not expected to keep disruptive young adults in school. Students who remained in school until high school graduation were often highly motivated, so it was often easy for teachers and students to form close bonds.

Not all schools, however, formed close bonds with students' communities of origin. As a result, throughout U.S. history, the school experiences of poor children and children of color have often been harsh and alienating. The credo of a 19th century boarding school for American Indians, "kill the Indian, save the child," was intended to crush the children's allegiance to their Indian nation and replace it with a reverence for white culture (Noley, 1994). Although those who founded schools for American Indian youngsters expressed zealous concern for these children, the effects of their "care" often harmed children. Set adrift after leaving these schools, many young American Indians faced the "loose and uncertain social integration" experienced by many of their descendants in the Southwest today--they did not feel they fit in their traditional culture or in the larger society (Huffine, 1989). Attempts at forging community on school campuses around values and interests that conflict with or ignore the values and interests of students' communities of origin may alienate students and place them at risk of anti-social and self-destructive behavior (ibid.). In search of a sense of belonging, some youth form dangerous subcultures, as explained by a Southeast Asian immigrant youth describing the attraction of gangs:

> Gangs allow us to identify with something....Americans look at us other. Our parents don't understand us. So where do we get that (belonging)? From our friends (Suryaraman, 1991).

Some researchers argue we can learn better ways of fostering a sense of community within schools by studying those with high levels of community influence or control. For example, in a case study of a segregated black high school before enforcement of *Brown v. Board of Education*, Siddle-Walker (1992) examines the ways in which congruent expectations, shared goals, and mutual respect between black educators, parents, and students produced successful students and a sense of community on campus. Similarly, Noley (1994) explores the strengths of the school

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systems instituted by the Cherokee and Choctaw, with initial help from missionaries, in the 19th century. Unlike the educational institutions managed by missionaries or the U.S. government, these school systems were controlled by the Indian nations and supported through tribal funds. The aim of these schools was to provide bilingual education and teach children useful knowledge about white ways. At the same time, a pre-eminent emphasis was placed on instilling the culture of their Indian nation (Noley, 1994). Community-controlled schools--whether they were for white children or children of color, rich children or poor children--may have had an easier time forging positive relations among school staff and students. Educators, parents, and students often shared a *Gemeinschaft* outside school that facilitated community-building on campus. Reinforcing the values and folkways of the community, these schools may have also eased students' transition into adult roles and responsibilities in their communities. Yet some would argue that while these schools bolstered students' attachment to their communities of origin, they also served as barriers to a more inclusive sense of community and social integration.

Since World War II, divergent trends have influenced school reforms aimed at expanding educational opportunities and improving the level of community on high school campuses and in the larger society. While there has always been a consensus that schools should foster "positive relations" on campus, advocates of school reform sometimes interpret this term very differently, with distinctive implications for school reform strategies.

Proponents of school desegregation and heterogeneous instructional grouping point to evidence that segregated school systems and academic tracks reinforce social divisions (Koslin et al., 1972). Integrationists argue that segregated schooling not only limits educational opportunities, but it perpetuates cultural misunderstandings and parochial identities by limiting contact between diverse groups. Disagreeing with the integrationist approach, many activists during the 1960s demanded community control of schools in order to provide an education that they believed would be more relevant to and supportive of children of color (Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967, pp.164-171; Carter and Segura, 1979, pp.21-25). Recent efforts to provide community-based, culturally sensitive instruction targeted at particular race and/or gender groups include programs for African-American male students (Ascher, 1991). Proponents of these reforms argue that community-based, ethnocentric instruction not only enhances positive relations in school, but that it also prepares young people for becoming responsible community members. Opponents charge that these strategies are divisive and fail to build a "common culture" (Ravitch, 1991-92).

Many of those involved in school reform today avoid the debate over educational strategies designed to bolster positive relations both on and off-campus, questioning whether schools have the ability, mandate, or resources to structure relations in school and with external networks in such a way as to foster community in the surrounding neighborhood or in the larger society. Although schools may use such strategies as heterogeneous grouping or same race-gender role

models, schools often give little thought or emphasis to the impact of these strategies on external social networks, focusing instead on their impact on school members' well-being on campus. To remedy the de-personalization of the large urban school, many reform efforts seek to break high schools into smaller units (e.g., schools-within-schools). Other reforms aimed at building caring and constructive relations on high school campuses include organizational changes such as site-based management, instructional strategies such as cooperative learning, and curricular innovations such as multicultural education and conflict resolution training (Legters, McDill, & McPartland, 1994). While often encouraging parent and community involvement, proponents of these reforms do not necessarily see them as a means to cultivate community in the surrounding neighborhood or in the larger society. Instead, these school reforms are often seen as bulwarks to safeguard youth against the rising tide of family and community disorganization throughout U.S. society, in affluent as well as poor communities. Yet it may be difficult to build community in school if the school-community is not linked to school members' lives outside school. A student may be more likely to feel a sense of community with others on campus if she knows that school-community members share values with and care about the people outside school with whom she shares values and caring relations.

Schools may never again play as central a role in promoting the values and interests of their surrounding communities as they often did in the days of the one-room schoolhouse. Yet given the higher rates of persistence to graduation, schools today may play a more important role than they once did in adolescents' psychosocial development and transition to adult roles and responsibilities. Thus, it is important to assess whether high schools are fostering positive relations on campus that enhance school-members' well-being and social ties both within and outside school.

Previous Work and Conceptual Base

Given the variety of reforms aimed at building community on high school campuses, how do we assess and compare their effectiveness? To begin, we must identify the definitional elements of "community" that may be measured across school sites. Although schools differ, we can assess and compare the extent to which they have key definitional elements of community and the relation between these definitional elements and specific school practices. Simply stated, to assess shared values, caring, and other definitional elements of community, we should measure the extent to which school members share values, feel that others care about them, and so on, then assess the relation between these definitional elements and specific school strategies such as cooperative learning and team teaching. Additionally, we can explore the relation between definitional elements and such student and staff outcomes as teacher collegiality and morale and

students' academic and psychosocial development. As the review above suggests, it may also be useful to explore the external networks that influence community on campus, the relation between school members' attachment to their community of origin and the school-community, and the influence of school-community on students' sense of community with their surrounding community and the larger society.

The American Institutes for Research, in collaboration with Dr. John Gardner of Stanford University, is developing ways of assessing and understanding the level of community in high schools, and the impact of school-community on school members' lives outside school. Much is already known about the components of model school reforms; our aim is to enhance this knowledge base by systematically examining the relation between effective schools and school-community factors. Given the increasing diversity of the student population, and the growing challenge of providing strong support systems for young people endangered by poverty and other social problems, building inclusive and supportive communities on campus may be necessary to ensure successful and sustained implementation of educational programs.

This study draws upon knowledge and resources derived from two research programs at AIR--the study of community in the workplace, supported by both the Independent Sector and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the study of educational programs for students and schools at risk, supported by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement within the U.S. Department of Education. Our conceptual base is derived from John Gardner's monograph *Building Community*, in which he prescribed twelve essential ingredients of sound communities (Independent Sector, 1991). Gardner views the building of community in schools, neighborhoods, and workplaces, and the development of mutually supportive links between these entities, as key to the regeneration of U.S. society.

To further develop this conceptualization, we undertook a number of activities, including a review of social science, personnel assessment, and education literatures to identify extant conceptualizations of and instruments related to community in schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods. To enhance our understanding of the elements of community, we adapted the methods of the "critical incident" technique developed by AIR founder John C. Flanagan and carried out a Community Event Survey, obtaining over 500 anecdotal reports of specific community-related behaviors and their results from more than 40 workplaces around the country, including schools.

As a result of these activities, we have developed a conceptual model of community in the workplace that relates *definitional variables* (those that represent the core or defining elements of community) and *regenerative variables* (those that are necessary for the continual renewal of workplace community (Royal & Rossi, 1994). We believe this conceptual model may also be applicable to schools. *Definitional variables* include:

Shared Values: "To require that a community agree on everything would be unrealistic and would violate our concern for diversity. But it has to agree on something. There has to be some core of shared values. Of all the ingredients of community this is possibly the most important." (Gardner, *Building Community*)

Shared Vision: "A healthy community should have a sense of where it should go, and what it might become....An answer to these questions can provide a vital goal and focus of motivation for the community." (Gardner, *Building Community*)

Shared Sense of Purpose: "To say that the community is characterized by shared ideas and attributes puts the matter too passively. It will be more truly a community if its members see it as an active defender of the shared ground. There should be a sense of social purpose." (Gardner, *Building Community*)

Caring: In a good community, "there is a sense of belonging and identity, a spirit of mutual responsibility. There is the altruism that is so consistently urged by major world religions." (Gardner, *Building Community*)

Trust: "A good community nurtures its members and fosters an atmosphere of trust." (Gardner, "Reinventing Community")

Communication: "Members of a well-functioning community communicate freely with one another....In large systems, much conscious effort is needed to maintain a free flow of information among all elements of the system, and to combat the we-they barriers that impede the flow." (Gardner, *Building Community*)

Participation: "Our society requires a dispersed network of leaders spread through every segment of the organization and down through every level. And beyond this wide network of identified leaders, there will be, in a vital community, a large number of individuals voluntarily sharing those leadership tasks that lend themselves to sharing, e.g., achieving a workable level of unity, motivating, explaining." (Gardner, *Building Community*)

Teamwork: "A good community fosters an atmosphere of cooperation and connectedness." (Gardner, *Building Community*)

Respect: "The members of a good community deal with each other humanely, respect individual differences and value the integrity of each person." (Gardner, *Building Community*)

Recognition: In the good community "there is recognition and thanks for hard work, and an awareness by the members that they need one another." (Gardner, *Building Community*)

Incorporation of Diversity: "What we seek--at every level--is pluralism that achieves some kind of coherence, wholeness incorporating diversity. I do not think it is venturing beyond the truth to say that wholeness incorporating diversity is the transcendent goal of our time, the task for our generation." (Gardner, *Building Community*)

These definitional elements may be divided into four categories: **core beliefs** (shared values, shared vision, shared sense of purpose), **interpersonal relationships** (caring, trust, respect), **functional relationships** (communication, participation, teamwork, recognition), and **incorporation of diversity**. Why are these four dimensions of social organization critical to community? Core beliefs are important because they draw community members together, help them form a common identity, and serve as a foundation for building rewarding interpersonal and working relationships. Interpersonal relationships fulfill the human need for emotional bonds. Functional relationships--that is, the structure and system of group interactions--are the vehicles for members to learn about and become involved with each other, to work together in developing and carrying out shared objectives, and to be rewarded for their contributions; ideally, functional relations reflect and affirm the community's core beliefs. Incorporation of diversity is essential to community vitality and cohesiveness. Communities that effectively incorporate diversity benefit from the unique talents, insights, and external social networks of their members, while ensuring cohesion by protecting minority interests and promoting the common good. We view these four dimensions of community as interdependent--for example, core beliefs, may influence the incorporation of diversity, and functional relationships may influence the depth of interpersonal relationships. Changes in one dimension may transform another dimension--for example, a change in functional relationships (an increase in open dialogue) may transform core beliefs (members may discover through open dialogue that their objectives should be different, and thus they may reshape their group values, purpose, and vision.) No single dimension defines community in and of itself.

In addition to these definitional elements, we have identified two types of regenerative or causative variables within communities: **investment variables** (individual and organizational investments in improving community--for example, in school-communities, staff development, conflict resolution strategies, reform implementation, and so on are investment variables) and **resource variables** (monetary, time, or other resources available to a community to invest in maintaining and building community). Contextual factors may influence the investment behaviors and resources of community members.

We seek to confirm and enhance our understanding of the definitional and regenerative elements of school-community by drawing upon the voices of high school staff and students.

Method

We are currently conducting focus group interviews with high school staff and students to identify the elements, boundaries, and contextual influences of school-community. To date, participants have been drawn from seventeen high schools in a large, culturally diverse metropolitan area. As the study proceeds, we will include participants from other high schools in our focus groups, conduct individual interviews, and perform ethnographic observations.

As noted by Basch (1987), focus groups have been an effective yet underutilized methodology in educational research. In a comfortable and open setting, the insights and feedback generated among focus group participants may reveal thoughts and feelings associated with the topic under discussion that might not be generated by one-on-one interactions between a researcher and an interviewee. Thus, focus group methodology seemed particularly appropriate to us as a first step in understanding the thoughts and feelings that underlie relationships on high school campuses.

To add expertise and a fresh perspective to the study, AIR hired Informed Decisions Research, a private consulting firm specializing in focus group research, to collaborate on conducting the group discussions and analyzing the findings. Informed Decisions Research was not involved in the development of our conceptualization of the definitional and regenerative elements of community, thus their ongoing and separate analysis of the data is not restricted by our conceptual framework.

Participants and Procedures

To recruit teachers, we obtained permission from school principals to distribute invitation letters in staff mailboxes. To recruit administrators, we contacted principals and other school administrators by telephone. To recruit students, we asked school administrators, directors of after-school programs, and others to recommend young people.

Three teacher focus groups, one administrator focus group, and one student focus group were held, ranging in size from five to nine participants. Average length of each session was two hours; sometimes the discussion among participants continued at the dinner provided by AIR after the formal session had ended. The formal sessions were audiotaped or videotaped; hand-written notes were made of relevant comments made in the dinner discussion.

Participants were diverse in social class and ethnicity (African-American, Asian-American, Latino, Pacific-Islander, and white), representing a total of 14 public and 3 Catholic high schools in urban and suburban areas. About two-thirds of public school participants were from schools serving significant populations of students at risk, while the other third were from more affluent

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public schools. Among the Catholic schools, one served an urban, culturally diverse population of students, one served a suburban working class and middle class population, and one served a predominately affluent student body. We included Catholic schools in our discussions because we believed that an exchange among public and Catholic school members might generate interesting points of view about the topic of school-community, as well as identify interesting areas for further study. Our goal is to enhance understanding of high school-communities, not to compare the level or characteristics of school-community in public and private schools. No inferences should be made that the participants' comments in any way represent the "typical" public or Catholic high school.

Focus Group Protocol and Rationale

The focus group protocol was designed to identify and qualitatively assess: (1) school members' views of school-community in their current context; (2) factors that inhibit or promote community in educational environments; and (3) school-members' conceptualizations of the "ideal community" at school.

Results

Although our focus groups and our analysis of focus group data have not yet been completed, we have some preliminary findings:

School Members' Views of Their School-Communities

In general, the feelings and behaviors that school staff and students identified as defining the presence or lack of community on their high school campuses mapped well unto our conceptualization of the definitional elements of community:

Shared Beliefs and Interests. All of the school administrators in our focus group mentioned the importance of shared beliefs or a guiding philosophy, but they disagreed about the types of beliefs that should comprise the core and the extent to which schools should promulgate values. Public school administrators emphasized the importance of a guiding philosophy which promotes valuing young people and providing them with excellent opportunities to grow intellectually and socially. While noting the importance of these goals, Catholic school administrators also underscored the importance of building community among staff and students around shared ethical and religious values. One public school administrator disagreed, stating:

> My personal beliefs and values shouldn't affect the way I deal with a child... I'm more into respecting children and their parents for what they are and who they are and working with it...sometimes we get so bogged down by what [a student] is wearing, etcetera...In public schools, because we are so diverse...we have to be open for everyone...Whatever students' values or beliefs are, Ihave to respect that, even if it disagrees with my values...I'm a Catholic, but the students at my school are Baptist, Buddhist, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, everything..I have to respect that....Some are gay. I have to respect that too. It's a learning process for me to respect that.

In response, a Catholic school administrator said he had been in public education for many years but had left, he said, because public schools are not allowed to teach values to young people: "We've got to tie values in...tie [values] together with learning...if we are missing one thing right now in the U.S., we are missing values."

The teacher focus groups also mentioned the importance of values, and they also discussed the ways in which values, viewpoints, and interests can bring people on campus or split them apart. One public school teacher from an affluent school noted:

> I think in my school we're sort of the opposite of what [a Catholic school teacherin the focus group] said...I think there's a tremendous lack of ethics in my studentbody that I work with...socially, [students] get along, but in terms of the [academics], there is a

> competitiveness that borders on being unhealthy...students don't help each other out [in studies] willingly..it is a shallow environment...I think that the goal is getting into MIT or Harvard or Stanford and making a big killing out there and making some money. And I think that really leaves a hole in the spirit....there is a kind of coldness [on campus]....

There seemed to be a consensus among teachers that the stated values and philosophy of their schools do not always guide everyday interactions. For example, one teacher noted that although the stated goal of the school was to provide an environment in which "all children can learn," many teachers did not believe that was a realistic objective. Teachers noted that the stated beliefs of the school do not always have a lot to do with their educational philosophy or what goes on in their classrooms once they close their classroom doors. When school values and objectives are not shared, tensions may arise between teachers who share the same educational philosophy or objectives as the principal and those who do not. In addition to shared beliefs around school issues, shared beliefs and interests around personal matters also influences relations between individuals. For example, some teachers noted that they felt closest to students who shared the same interests that they did and tended to spend more time outside of the classroom with those students. One teacher mentioned that he feels more engaged with students in the classroom when he is able to use books that he finds interesting than he does when he has to use mandated texts.

Students mentioned that they are more likely to feel a sense of community with people on campus who share their beliefs and interests. For example, one public school student mentioned that some of the friends that she'd grown up with had recently become very religious, and she had lost touch with them in high school because she was not religious. A Catholic high school student mentioned that differences in viewpoints have divided one of his classes:

> There's kind of a tension between people [in the class]...when you get into class discussion, things are said and you know what people really think. Once we were talking about immigration and some really racist things were said. That separated people. I don't talk with certain people now because of that incident...

It is important to note that people do not have to share identical personal beliefs nd interests in order to comprise a community. Thus, in our original conceptualization of community, we emphasized the importance of core beliefs related to the purpose and functioning of the collective, and we down-played the significance of personal beliefs and interests. Yet it is likely that if there are serious divisions concerning personal beliefs or interests most important to school members, the school-community may fragment or disintegrate altogether, even if school members continue to share, for example, identical values about education or share a sense of purpose about the mission of the school. Conversely, as noted in our group discussions, sense of community at school may be deepened when teachers and students' personal interests are incorporated into school activities.

Warm Interpersonal Relationships. Administrators, teachers, and students all mentioned the importance of warm interpersonal relationships on campus. However, a few administrators mentioned that their relationships with students tended to be formal, and that usually the only time they had contact with students was when students got into trouble and were sent to the office. One administrator said that although he would like to have warm relations with students, students view him as a tough guy "Clint Eastwood" type because of his disciplinary role in the school, and they run when they see him coming.

Teachers mentioned that students, in particular those with problems outside school, often crave personal advice, attention, and support from teachers. Some teachers mentioned that they are closer to their students than to other faculty. One teacher said she gets her sense of community from her students because she feels isolated from the staff on campus. While some teachers noted they were on friendly terms with all staff at their school, others noted that they did not have very much contact or tended not to relate well with office staff. One teacher commented that office staff were the "eyes and ears" of the administration, and she was careful what she said around them because she viewed them as spies. Teachers underscored the importance of respect among staff and between teachers and students in building positive relations on campus.

Students were the most vocal about the significance of interpersonal relationships on campus, and they emphasized the importance of caring, respect, trust, and emotional intimacy. One student described the sense of community that had developed over time among the members of a class on women's issues:

> We get to talk about what it's like to be a woman in this society...it's nota feminist thing, we just focus on ourselves. Things [said by the participants]are totally kept in the room, so people feel comfortable opening up. Sometimespeople start crying talking about their families...People in the group really respect and support each other...I don't say I like everyone in the group, but I've developed respect for them.

Feelings of closeness and emotional intimacy on campus may also develop when school staff behave in a natural, down-to-earth manner around students. One student mentioned that his band teacher encouraged a sense of community in his class by acting "more like a person...he cracks jokes and makes us laugh...he doesn't act like he's higher than the students like some teachers do...we spend a lot of time with him so we get to know him...we treat him more like a person than a teacher, but we still respect him." Other students also noted that they feel close to teachers who act "more like persons," respect and get to know students as individuals, and are supportive of students. Several students commented that teachers who do not seem to care about or like young people and do not treat them with respect are a barrier to positive relations on campus. One student mentioned that she often feels alienated at school, but she feels somewhat close to the school

janitor because "he's always there, saying hi, how you're doing." Similarly, other students mentioned that some non-teaching staff such as counselors and office staff are friendly to students and provide them with attention and support.

Democratic, Participatory Functional Relationships. Teachers and students emphasized the importance of democratic, participatory functional relationships. Teachers who have opportunities to meet with their colleagues regularly and participate in decision-making feel more of a sense of community than those who do not. Students indicated that open communication, opportunities for students and staff to meet together to solve school problems, and a chance for everybody to meaningfully participation in classroom and school activities is essential to community on campus. Some students noted that young people who do not get involved in school activities were less likely to be viewed positively by their peers.

Incorporation of Diversity. In general, school staff and students mentioned that although there are usually no serious conflicts or fights among people of diverse ethnic backgrounds in their schools, people tended to stay in their own ethnic groups. Some school staff did not view this self-segregation as a problem, believing that the various ethnic groupings provide students with a natural means of experiencing community on campus. Other staff and students expressed concern about the self-segregation. Young people of color noted that students who cross ethnic boundaries are considered "sell-outs." One white student mentioned that her peers make fun of her because one of her friends was a black male student. Some young people of color mentioned that they feel alienated at their schools. One student felt that the security guards at his school "got on his case" more because he was a black male. A white female student from a different school agreed that security guards tend to be harsher with young people of color than white students. A Pacific-Islander student described the racial divisions among people in one of her classes:

> The class is totally segregated. Minority kids are put all the way in the back. The teacher ignores us. We tried to talk to the vice-principal about her, but he couldn't get rid of her because she's been teaching in that school a long time. My mother even came to talk to the vice-principal, but nothing happened, the teacher's still there and she hasn't changed...I feel close to the other minority students in the class--when you're in that type of situation, you can't help but feel close. But I don't feel close to the white students, because I feel they kind of support her.

A Catholic school teacher mentioned that although there are warm interpersonal relationships on campus between teachers and students of different backgrounds, sometimes there is a lack of cultural understanding which creates distance between people. The Italian teachers remember the school as it was back in the days when the student body was mostly Irish and Italian, and they have trouble relating to the experiences of the new student body, which is comprised primarily of young people of color. A public school teacher from the same urban area as the Catholic high

school teacher mentioned that her school has experienced a similar turnover in the composition of the student body and has similar problems. One teacher mentioned that it is hard for students to feel a sense of community on campus when they know that the school is not a part of their neighborhood community and that "at the end of six, seven periods, [they] will be leaving" to return to their neighborhood communities. Campus aides who are from the same ethnic communities as students help provide young people of color with a sense of community on campus.

Race and ethnicity are not the only types of diversity that pose challenges for schools. Teachers mentioned that there tends to be a split between the teachers who are "old-timers" and the new, younger teachers. Also, there tends to be an age split among students--some teachers felt that new, younger students have a tough time feeling a part of the school, while older students tend to predominate in school activities and have more of a sense of community on campus. Both teachers and students mentioned that there are sometimes problems on campus between male and female students. Female students said that some male students do not treat young women with respect, and one female student said she believes teachers "call on boys more" in class. An administrator mentioned that a counselor at his school had a negative attitude toward a gay student who was having problems in school, and the administrator had to intervene to ensure that the student received proper counseling. When asked if there were any people on campus who had a hard time fitting in, both school staff and students noted that there are some teachers and students on campus who seem isolated from others for some reason. In general, school staff and students view these people negatively and believe their isolation is their own fault. According to staff and students, everybody who wants to fit in can find some group--club, activity, ethnic group--in which they can fit in. A teacher noted, "I think that the students who are marginalized--it is sort of a self-imposed situation. I've seen kids walking around campus [alone] and so on. It might be for, you know, personal reasons or something like that--they just feel anti-social--I can't say." When teachers were asked about the possibility that some of these marginal students might be "falling through the cracks" because of emotional problems, one teacher said that special education ensured that all students who truly had serious problems would receive adequate care.

Factors that Influence Community on Campus

Teachers from schools with a high level of community on campus said that strong parental support was a key to their success. Students and staff from schools with low levels of community indicated that a significant barrier to creating community in school is lack of community outside of school. Areas torn by racial, class, or "turf" divisions provide a weak foundation for building community among diverse groups in school. A teacher observed that his school draws students

from several different communities, and that none of these communities feel "a sense of ownership" or responsibility for the school as a whole, thus the school does not receive adequate parental support. Poor parents do not trust the school to safeguard the interests of their children, and affluent parents fear the school will fail to ensure that their children receive a quality education. A student from a poor area mentioned that "turf" divisions in her neighborhood cause conflicts among students at school. She noted that these divisions have split people for generations, and that kids "learn [the "turf" divisions] like their times tables when they are in elementary school."

In addition to problems related to divisions among the communities surrounding the school, school staff noted that lack of resources and too many regulations were barriers to community on campus. Some teachers said that if schools received more resources for organizational reforms such as smaller class sizes, they could "work wonders" at building community on campus. A few teachers said that regulations limit the degree to which they can talk openly and honestly to students about sensitive issues such as pregnancy, thus teachers are restricted in their ability to "speak from the heart." High school administrators noted that building community on campus may be easier in private schools than in public schools. For example, in public schools, tenure policies limit principals' ability to get rid of teachers who fail to show caring and concern for students. Administrators and teachers noted that school reform efforts may have both positive and negative influences on the level of community in schools. Teachers who participate in the reform effort may have a heightened sense of community because of their increased involvement with colleagues in planning sessions, while teachers who do not "buy into" the reform may feel increasingly alienated. Reform efforts may exacerbate tensions between new teachers, who may be more open to adopting new practices, and the teachers who have been at the school a long time, who may be resistant to reform.

In general, public school teachers felt relatively powerless to improve the level of community on campus without external support. Students, on the other hand, felt that even without outside help, there was much that could be done to improve the level of community on campus, and they emphasized the need for school-wide meetings and rallies to discuss problems and devise ways of improving community on campus.

Summary and Discussion

In our conceptualization, school members' sense of community on campus is a function of social networks both within and outside the school. Students and staff are most likely to feel attachment when they perceive that their relationships on and off campus are interdependent and mutually supportive. Based on our review of the literature and previous research on community in various settings, we have set forth what we believe to be the four dimensions of community: core

beliefs, interpersonal relationships, functional relationships, and incorporation of diversity. Within each of these dimensions, we have outlined definitional elements of community. Also, we have identified two types of regenerative factors within communities--investment behaviors and available resources--that may influence the level of community. We have also considered the contextual factors that affect the investment behaviors and resources of community members, exploring the historical, organizational, psychosocial, and environmental influences on high school-communities.

To confirm and enhance our conceptualization of school-communities, we are currently conducting a series of group discussions with high school staff and students. To date, focus group findings map well unto our conceptual framework. Furthermore, our discussions with school staff and students suggest that building community on campus may be a necessary prerequisite for school reform and improving the school enviroment for students at risk. However, our findings also suggest that community is not a panacea for all students at risk--emotionally troubled and withdrawn students, for example, may may flounder even in schools with high levels of community and may need individualized attention. Further research is needed to examine the performance and well-being of teachers and students who lack the skills or desire to forge relationships with others in schools with varying levels of community.

The applicability of these findings to younger students and other settings should be viewed with caution. For young children, caring relations may be very salient, while shared beliefs may be less important than they become in high school. Another limitation of the data is that all focus groups to date have been conducted in a liberal, culturally diverse metropolitan area. Rural areas, homogeneous schools, and more conservative settings may have different notions of school-community.

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